

I write expressing my will and interest to take part in the orientation trip to UAE and Pakistan. My motivation is based on a personal historical perspective (in the case of Pakistan), and a set of contemporary concerns (in both Pakistan and UAE) and how they overlap.

I have been to neither locations or parts of the world, the South Asian subcontinent nor the Middle East, and this of course is a prime motivator, to expand my perspectives beyond the so called Global North West. By this I mean Northern European, North American, and Developed East Asian urban culture (for example I have travelled to Chicago, New York, Seoul, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Taipei and Tokyo, as well as Australia and New Zealand including Settler, Māori cultural politics or heritage, which are all examples of reaching beyond Europe for cultural research and network projects over my adult career. I am also familiar with the geopolitical category of the Global East (not rich enough, not poor enough, with complex legacies of colonisation and conflict). My artist-organiser and cultural production work and networking has taken me across Eastern Europe, the Baltic States in particular, Russia, Georgia and Armenia, and I can draw up an excellent range of contacts in contemporary, interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary arts or network cultures.

My work with Pixelache in Helsinki, RIXC Centre for New Media Culture in Riga, and Interdisciplinary Arts Centre SERDE in Aizpute, among others, has often brought perspectives from the Global South, most appropriately examples of where artists, hackers or interdisciplinary designers explore traditional material crafts and appropriate technologies in the context of cultural heritage, energy and material sustainability, as well as often decentralised alternative economical models. These examples, which have inspired my artistic and arts facilitation or mediation work, have emphasized communal ways and practices that are on the verge of either being lost or reinvented by a new generation, sometimes with a network cultural twist. I would further seek examples of such projects, especially in the Pakistani urban context. The Bricolabs Network, who Pixelache invited as co-curators to our 2013 festival, includes several practitioners and especially namely Atteqa Malik, one of the most prominent members of Pakistan's media arts scene and member of the MAUJ collective, leads the way.[1] I would like to catch up with her projects and concerns with collaborations to the North and West of South Asia.

Within my own personal art career history, in my early years of engaging with media and digital arts, I tried (but ultimately not successful) to initiate a digital arts collective between 1998-2000 in collaboration with Imtiaz Amjad, a Scottish-Pakistani interdisciplinary designer and maker who lived, as I did at the time, in Glasgow. We had a strong friendship and collaboration, and charismatically over a 1 year period, we developed a network of interested people who were willing to operate under the imagined collective and anonymous name DVAtion or DViAnts, bringing together different practitioners of various backgrounds, disciplines and colour.[2] We were inspired by London digital art collectives such as Mongrel UK, and K3 Media, who operated in the English arts administrative realm of Media Arts, Performance Arts, Diversity and Black Arts, but at the time no such activity was happening to our knowledge in Scotland. We undertook one collective process-based exhibition, and several digital VJ gigs during 1999, however the collaboration between us ended when I left Scotland in 2000 to further study in NE England, and he inherited his father's family marble business in Islamabad, Pakistan. Despite our geographical dislocation, we kept in touch over the years especially around *Eid* celebration, speaking several times per year, but have not met in almost 20 years.

While it is not appropriate to necessarily use such a network visit to rekindle personal friendships, I would like to use this early career experience in collaboration with Imtiaz Amjad to explore the complications of South Asian hospitality as it currently manifests in Pakistan, and from my formative experiences in Scotland. DVAtion was strongly based on hospitality, as the key strengthener of trust and solidarity in the group, especially when we imagined that our collective would operate under a common anonymizing name

While living in Finland since early 2003, the particularity of hospitality has been an important aspect of my social practice as an artist or cultural organiser. This socialized work is further augmented by more recent notions of online hospitality, e.g. in Social Media, and facilitation or moderation in networks. I have been a member of Refugee Hospitality Club Finland Facebook group since 2009, and for 3 years (from 2015-2018; 2019-) I was/am one of up to 11 volunteer moderators for Refugee Hospitality Club Finland public Facebook group, that at the time of writing has 14,500 persons subscribed.[3] On occasions of stress, dealing with inappropriate posting to the group, trolls or hate-motivated posting, we have had been challenged into breaking anonymity, revealing the personal person hosting or maintaining the space, or on other occasions, retreating back behind a common label of 'RHC *adminit*'.

Hence, I already have some idea of the Pakistani and trans-local cultural exchange that happens between for example Scotland and Pakistan, with both having complicated relationships to the British State and the historical colonial enterprise of the British establishment in the South Asian subcontinent. I wish to explore and document, comment upon and witness, everyday aspects of hospitality that I experience in both locations, and note how as a diverse group of Northern Europeans face, accept, and are challenged by, Pakistani and Arabian hospitality. Both cultures are renowned for their hospitality towards strangers from elsewhere. How does this match with contemporary migrant politics, the more-or-less harsh and challenging mobility regimes for citizens of Pakistan or the United Arab Emirates to Northern European states? What is the hospitality afforded to migrants in Pakistan and UAE, and how are artists or cultural projects, non-governmental cultural centres, or institutions tackling this subject? The UAE is unfortunately well known for not affording foreign residents citizenship, despite many years or decades in the country. Migrant labour has been a hot and controversial topic in the massive construction and spectacle-oriented projects of the region, but the rules of hospitality arguably may still apply to guests from afar. Where/When does the system of hospitality in our own intensive travel requirements (4-5 cities in 2 countries, 2 different climates, different language bases such as Urdu and Arabic) stretch and lose its smoothing comforts and rounding of social edges? English will be our likely *lingua franca* for the group, but we will also need to acknowledge it is a colonial language for both destinations, at two different phases of the Anglophonic Empire: In Pakistan as a British Colonial enterprise since the 18th Century, and in the Middle East as a United States-ian Colonial enterprise from the 1940s onwards). How does this social-historical and political fact stretch both personal and institutional hospitality on both sides?

While I have an active visual social media communications experience, I also seek to mix anecdote with some readings on colonial exotic travel, and writing about personal colonising or de-colonising acts.

[1] Atteqa Malik, as featured in Transmediale Festival 2009, Berlin: <https://transmediale.de/atteqa-malik>

[2] DVAtion / DViant, <https://archive.org/details/agryfp-1999-amjad-dvation-dviant-glasgow>

[3] Refugee Hospitality Club Finland: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/rhc.helsinki/>